

Planning and Engineering

Comprehensive Planning

Affordable Housing

Roanoke – Lee Street Neighborhood Comprehensive Community Development Grant

In 2002, the Town applied for and received a Housing Study Planning Grant for \$25,000 with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The Town matched these planning funds with \$5,000 for a more comprehensive study identifying housing needs townwide. The study will allow Council to better assess the town's affordable housing stock and to prioritize identified needs and focus on specific neighborhoods.

A Housing Management Team was appointed by the Town Manager to help staff evaluate housing study information. Over 300 housing assessment surveys were mailed to neighborhood representatives and over 30 percent were returned. The Housing Team chose a section along Roanoke and Lee Streets of the Downtown Eastside Neighborhood for the project.

In 2003, the town was awarded \$1 Million in funding for the Roanoke-Lee Street Community Improvement Grant. The project will rehabilitate approximately twenty houses and build over a dozen structures. All tenants are required to meet the state's Low-Moderate Income (LMI) qualifications. Public improvements will include upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure, street lights, new sidewalks/curb and gutter, improved stormwater drainage, and repaved streets. The project is estimated at \$3.5 million dollars in public/private improvements.

Neighborhood Enhancement Program

This program was implemented in July 1999 following a year of public input, research, and program development. This program was in response to two of the Town Council's Strategic Goals for the 1998-2000 period:

Neighborhood Development- Working in concert with neighborhood organizations assist the development of self governing groups and associations that enable citizens to have a more effective voice in shaping their neighborhoods and developing solutions to neighborhood concerns as well as building neighborhoods as stable, interesting, pleasant, and desirable places to live.

Upgrading Substandard Housing- Step up and consolidate enforcement of private property building maintenance, yard maintenance, control of trash and debris, occupancy restrictions and other relevant issues that impact the quality of housing in neighborhoods throughout the Town.

Staff from all departments of the Town contributed to the program design. The Neighborhood Enhancement Program consists of three components, Neighborhood Planning, Rental Property Permitting, and Nuisance Abatement. The goal is to provide a program to recover, protect, and enhance the vitality of our residential neighborhoods as desirable places to live.

Neighborhood Planning

The Neighborhood Planning component has empowered citizens to take leadership roles and town staff to begin the transition from facilitators to resources and educators at neighborhood meetings, special club and organization luncheons and special events. Resident participation varies between neighborhood planning areas and request for staff demand indicated acceptance, participation, trust and respect for the promise that the Town listens and is responsive to citizen concerns.

Seventeen Neighborhood Grants were awarded this year to enhance and add amenities to the neighborhoods. The grant projects and neighborhoods this year included:

- Alleganhy Neighborhood for a landscaping and picnic area improvements.
- Hethwood - Price's Fork Neighborhood for the Oak Manor Commons area landscape and path improvements Phase II, Oak Manor park improvements Phase II, Haymarket playground, and Stroubles Mill entrance enhancements.
- Glade - Westover Neighborhood for the Westover Park improvements, and the Glen trail enhancements.
- Farmview -Ramble Neighborhood for the Whitney Court park enhancements,
- Ellett-Jennelle Neighborhood for street lighting improvements.
- Tom's Creek Neighborhood for Landscaping improvements at Shadowlake Village and Park equipment improvements at the Village of Tom's Creek.
- Woodbine - Wyatt Farm Neighborhood for trail and landscaping enhancements,

Also this year there were 13 certificates presented for the Civic Beautification Awards. The awards were for accomplishments in the categories of Classic Beautification, Neighborhood - Block Enhancements, and Historic Preservation.

The third annual Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference was held in the City of Charlottesville where six Blacksburg neighborhood activists attended. Town staff continues to provide assistance to help produce this annual conference. In addition Blacksburg has been selected to host the 2004 Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference

This conference provides a great opportunity to for citizens from across the state to network together and learn ways to strengthen their neighborhoods. Make sure to come out for the 2004 Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference here in Blacksburg.

Neighborhood Walks

A neighborhood walk is a scheduled event in which area residents can meet with Town Council members, Planning Commissioners, the Town Manager and Department Heads at a site within the neighborhood. The group then walks a route through the neighborhood, which is predetermined by the residents, and discusses issues of concern. The neighborhood walk is an opportunity for residents to talk one on one with Council members and other Town representatives about their concern, and for all who participate to see the unique characteristics of each neighborhood first hand. A Neighborhood Walk was held in the Miller-Southside neighborhood this year. Future walks will be scheduled with neighborhoods as residents request.

Engineering

Clay Street Extension-

Work continues on the Clay Street Extension project. The section of the street extension from Jefferson Street to Piedmont Street has received the base course of asphalt. The Piedmont Street/Clay Street intersection is completed and paved. The contractor continues the grading work on the section between Piedmont Street and Alleghany Street. The construction of the relocated Alleghany Water Booster Pump Station is completed. This will allow for the regrading of Alleghany Street to begin. Expected completion date is Fall 2003.

South Main Street Median Project-

This project will construct a center median along South Main Street from Hubbard Street to South Park Drive/Professional Park Drive. The construction contract has been awarded with construction set to begin during the Fall 2003.

Highland Park Water Tank-

The Virginia Department of Health has approved the Preliminary Engineering Report for the construction of a 2.0 million gallon water storage tank to be located on the existing water tank site on Palmer Drive. The engineering design can now be finalized with construction expected to begin the Spring 2004.

Sanitary Sewer Capacity Issue:

This year, the Planning and Engineering Department worked with citizens and Council to aide in the decision to construct the Toms Creek Sewer. The sewer is critical in offloading sewer flows from the Stroubles Creek Sewershed that causes the lines to overflow during large rainfall events.

SEWER CAPACITY AREAS

Several sewerage options were identified, studied, and presented to Council including the following: a 460 bypass option, the Tom's Creek sewer option, a lagoon option, and upgrading Main Street lines option. In addition to construction feasibility and design of these options, staff estimated costs of construction and operation and maintenance related to both the Tom's Creek sewer and the 460 bypass option with a STEG (Septic Tank Effluent Gravity) system to serve the Tom's Creek Basin. Considerable time was spent assisting with requests from Council on the sewer topic as well as rewriting the comprehensive plan relating to the Tom's Creek Sewer decision.

Pump Station Upgrades

The Highland Park pump station design was completed and Boggs Municipal Services, Inc. began construction this year on the station. The original station was old and a pump had failed, causing the construction of a new station to take precedence over other designs. Forest Hills

pumping station design is complete and awaiting construction. Murphy's pumping station design is nearing completion awaiting contract agreement with Maple Ridge Subdivision and Health Department approval for the downstream sewer analysis. This is on hold until such time the sewer capacity problem is solved.

Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP)

The NTCP is a program set up to collectively address neighborhood traffic related issues. Individuals in the neighborhoods that have an interest in improving their current traffic condition initiate the program. Town staff sends out announcements to residents in neighborhoods who may be interested in participating in the program telling them when an after work hour meeting will be held. The first meeting covers defining the problem, areas of interest, methods of traffic calming, and steps that must be taken to achieve the desired success. The meetings that follow are more concentrated on coming up with solutions that everyone in the neighborhood is content with. A traffic control plan is conceptually designed for the neighborhood and voted on. An approved plan is then taken to the Town Council for their final approval. The neighborhood can then start implementing the desired changes. Currently there are currently 4 active NTCP's: Wyatt Farms, Alleghany, Miller-Southside, and the Bennett Hill-Progress Neighborhood.

The NTCP had meetings with the Miller/Southside Neighborhood after Council directed staff to do so with resolution guidelines. Approximately 5 meetings were held to come up with a neighborhood consensus on a traffic calming option. This option was sent to survey and failed passing the neighborhood program consensus requirement of 67%. Therefore, the neighborhood was unable to include the traffic calming initiatives in the neighborhood plan.

Community Development

The Development Administration function of the Planning and Engineering Department has been busy over the past year working closely with developers, citizens, and town committees, commissions, and Town Council. Projects range from large master planned community rezonings to many small-scale additions to homes and businesses. The following table describes the number and type of projects completed over the past year. In addition, the total time from submittal to approval is included for site plans and subdivisions.

Application Type	Number of Projects	Process Time to Approval
Rezoning	5	Non Applicable
Special Use Permit	11	Non Applicable
Variance	4	Non Applicable
Appeal to Zoning Admin. Decision	1	Non Applicable
Right of Way Decision	7	Non Applicable
Major Subdivision	6	37 Business Days
Minor Subdivision	32	16 Business Days
Site Plans	35	24 Business Days

Building Construction / Permits and Inspections

Fiscal Year 2003	
Total Number of Inspections	3,749
Total Number of Permits Issued	804
Total Number of New Dwelling Units	199
Total Number of Certificates of Occupancy	181
Total Amount of Fees Collected	\$440,312
Total Value of Construction	\$41,403,288

Environmental Compliance

Stormwater MS4 Permit Obtained

The Town of Blacksburg obtained an MS4 permit from the Department of Environmental Quality to discharge its stormwater to the rivers of the state. This entailed creating a stormwater program under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System that includes the following six areas: Public Education and Outreach on Stormwater Impacts, Public Involvement and Participation on Stormwater Issues, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Measures, Construction Site Runoff Control, Post Construction Stormwater Management, and Public Works Stormwater Management. The permit requires 5 year objectives and measures that are evaluated by DEQ every two years. The permit is good until December of 2007.

Drinking Water Quality

The Cross Connection Program was active with 645 annual backflow device tests completed, 149 surveys of water customers requiring backflow devices accomplished, 110 new backflow device installations witnessed, and 972 residential backflows documented.

Rental Permitting and Inspections Program

The Rental Permitting Program was first introduced to the community through an Ordinance adopted by Town Council in June 1999. Under this program all rental properties within the single-family neighborhoods, which is defined as those areas zoned for single-family use, must be registered annually with the Town. Effective July 1, 2003 this area was expanded to include a specific neighborhood planning area at the requests of a large majority of those residents living within the designated area. This area is referred to as the Bennett Hill-Progress Street neighborhood planning area. There is one full time Property Maintenance Official performing the inspections.

The purpose of the inspections is to assure the rental units are safe and maintained appropriately on the basis of this State adopted Code standard. Each unit is subject to an inspection for

compliance with Building Maintenance Code on a triennial cycle. The table below identifies the history of the inspection process.

The top 5 safety concerns are inoperable or missing smoke detectors; missing backflow preventers to ensure the safety of the town's water supply coming into the home; loose, broken and/or missing electric receptacles/switches/fixtures; missing, damaged or illegal doors/locks; and, exterior painting and missing house numbers posted on the property.

Effective July 1, 2003, the proactive exterior property maintenance process became more visible to the community. There were 86 inspections outside of the rental program areas to address exterior property maintenance concerns

Fiscal Year 2003	
Total Number of Property Addresses Registered in Rental Permitting Program	571
Average Inspections per Month	47
Total Number of Inspection Visits	995
Total Number of Units Passed	552
Total Number of Units Requiring Subsequent Re-Inspection	6 (Fees were paid @ \$100 each)

Code Enforcement / Nuisance Abatement

The Nuisance Abatement element of the program was implemented as a means to consolidate response to complaints of basic nuisance code items such as weeds and debris, removal of abandoned vehicles, refuse and litter control, and other similar issues. In addition, the objective of the program is to move to a proactive enforcement process over time such that these violations are noted and enforcement pursued prior to staff receiving a complaint.

Projects initiated this year: 2,604

Staff received 106 (4.1% of the total caseload) complaints from residents this past year. A total of 253 notices of violation were issued which resulted in a contractor being hired to abate 35 violations for a cost of approximately \$4,700.

Summary by Type of Violation

Description	No. Cases	Percent
Tall grass	278	10.7
Debris	669	25.7
Inoperable vehicles	179	6.9
Address numbering	34	1.3

Trash collection	1,136	43.6
Zoning violations (Forwarded to Zoning Inspector)	12	0.5
Property Maintenance (Forwarded to PM Official)	9	0.3
Snow Removal	259	9.9
Miscellaneous (ponds, birds, site obstructions, traffic concerns)	28	1.1
TOTAL	2,604	100.0

Effective code enforcement is perhaps the most challenging goal to address with a positive approach. The process used by town staff is to visit a residence with a note bringing their concern to their attention and providing them a list of alternatives to resolve the issue themselves. The residence is visited a second time in 5 days. If the issue has not been addressed a formal letter is mailed to the owner and a deadline to abate the concern is noted. Should the deadline not be met, a contractor hired by Town staff abates the issue at the expense of the homeowner (i.e., mow the grass, haul of debris, and the like). The town is then reimbursed the cost of that service.

The success of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program is highly noted through the partnerships that have developed within the community. Some of the Neighborhood Enhancement Programs partners are:

VT Student Government Association - Big Event Town Wide Litter Collection (300 volunteers)
 NRV Community Action for neighbor assistance
 Montgomery County Health Dept./Building Official for restaurant
 National Wildlife/Fisheries for non-domesticated animal nuisances
 VT Professional Business Writing for Literature and student analysis
 VT YMCA Programs
 Town/Gown Community Relations Committee
 New River Valley Mediation Conflict Resolution Center

Geographic Information System / Town Mapping

Town of Blacksburg participated in the Virginia Base Mapping Program which is managed by the Virginia Geographic Information Network, (VGIN) a division of the state's Virginia Information Technologies Agency. In the spring of 2002, the entire state was photographed using low altitude photography. The resulting images were used to produce a state-wide, seamless set of digital orthophotographs for use at state, regional, and local levels. Blacksburg's product set was delivered in June of 2003 and has been reviewed for product quality and accuracy. These images are licensed by the state of Virginia but are available to the public in printed formats. The imagery will soon be available for viewing and printing on the Blacksburg Web-based Geographic Information System, <http://arcims2.webgis.net/blacksburg/>.

Blacksburg's Geographic Information System (GIS) is applied in many ways. During the past year the system has been used to study affordable housing issues, economic development, site locations for public utilities, and for the production of map displays for work sessions, committees, and the general public.

Blacksburg's GIS Services Division is also working with Montgomery County is standardizing formats and processes that will enhance the sharing of information and entirely eliminate discrepancies in the parcel layer between jurisdictions. This project is managed by the County's GIS Division and is part of a conversion project to move all their information into an enterprise-wide Geographic Information System.